

excerpt

EMBRACE THAT GIRL | CRIS RAMOS GREENE

"Why are you here?" It's less of a question and more of an accusation. His blue eyes pierce my soul right through his glasses. One by one, he makes eye contact with everyone in the room. "Because you've gotten comfortable. Well let me tell you something."

He lowers his voice for effect and adjusts his wedding ring right before he lands his hook, "Comfort arrives as a guest, stays as a host and remains to enslave you." He lets that sit in the air as we all presumably take a scan of our lives and decide to trust him.

Yes, it's true. Comfort has been an unwelcome guest keeping me in a strange purgatory, a state that's not exactly painful but not joyful. What I mean to say is, my life is good with short bursts of greatness, but mostly filled with days that feel like the real things I want are out of my reach.

"Isn't that why you're here?" He says coolly, going back to good cop in a way I can tell he's practiced before, a slightly aggressive tough-love approach directly followed by his casual I'm-your-pal persona. "We can create anything in our lives from nothing by simply declaring it so," he finishes and stands in silence once more to give the crowd time to consider if we're in or out.

The rest of the group, oddballs and alphas alike, are all smiling captivated. They're in. I keep scanning the room in awe at the effect this man has. It's incredible and yet a tad frightening. Being here and forced to confront my discomfort is not the same as reading books at home, no matter how life altering the content is. I take a deep breath and decide to trust my initial instinct to be here. Fuck it. I'm in too.

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As the speaker asks us to consider what brought us here, I think back. There are all the obvious things, like the fact that I just turned 30 and have a stagnant career. There's my low self-esteem and in general my need to be approved by others. No doubt there's some family stuff. While they love and support me, there is a significant barrier in our relationship, namely that I'm rational.

But, to his point, what really brought me here? That's a longer story. If I had to consider his question thoughtfully, it all began when I entered the "real world," or whatever version of that people like to talk about when referring to becoming an adult.

Ever since I graduated from college and entered the workforce, I've been failing to feel like an accomplished person. I've come closer for sure, but I thought I'd be a lot farther at thirty. I agree with him that comfort has never really been on my side. I don't like feeling out of control, not even a little bit. I've held onto beliefs, relationships and behaviors that should have been phases in my life for so long after their expiration date it's laughable. My own stagnation is not unlike the 7th Avenue construction. I've been showing up in my hard hat and banging random things with tools bolstered by the prospect of a finished product, only it never seems to get here. Years pass and then I find myself rinsing and recycling the same long-term goals never quite making the stride I need to get there.

What lies on the other side of my comfort? I really hope it's my freedom.